



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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ICE arrests five and dismantles three drug labs in takedown of major methamphetamine distribution ring

SANTA ANA, Calif. – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested five suspects and dismantled three drug labs in Orange County and the Inland Empire today following an investigation into a criminal organization suspected of manufacturing, importing, and selling large quantities of methamphetamine in the Southland.

Three of the individuals arrested this morning were indicted last week on charges of conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute and manufacture methamphetamine and are expected to make their initial appearance in federal court here this afternoon. They include the organization's suspected ringleader, Jose Anguiano-Barragan, 37, of Anaheim; Daniel Contreras, 24, of Orange; and Ricardo Sarco-Sanchez, 22, of Riverside. Two other suspects in the case, Jose Crisofono Valencia-Rios, 38, of Anaheim; and Pedro Sanchez, 23, of Riverside, are expected to appear in federal court tomorrow. The investigation is ongoing.

During this morning's operation, ICE agents uncovered three active methamphetamine manufacturing "labs," including one at Anguiano-Barragan's Anaheim residence, located within two blocks of a school. When ICE agents, accompanied by officers from the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, entered Anguiano-Barragan's home at 1371 S. Loara Street they found barrels of what are believed to be drug-making chemicals, scales, several handguns, and more than \$240,000 in cash. The other two drug labs were located in the garage and a shed of a residence at 11235 Cypress Avenue in Riverside. ICE agents believe the defendants were making 20 to 30 pounds of methamphetamine a week.

Court documents in the case indicate that the criminal organization constructed special hidden compartments in their vehicles to conceal and transport drugs and drug-making materials. ICE agents say the ring used separate locations for their various criminal activities, including sites where they produced the methamphetamine, another location for storing the drug sale proceeds, and a "clean house" to use as an official address if discovered by law enforcement.

"Methamphetamine is a horrible drug that destroys lives and ruins communities," Kumar Kibble, the assistant special agent in charge of ICE's office of investigations in Orange County. "One of the keys to dismantling these operations is to follow the money trail because greed is what fuels this dangerous trade. By pooling our information and our resources, ICE and its law enforcement partners succeeded in dismantling a criminal organization that posed a serious threat to many communities.

Today's arrests cap an eight-month multi-agency investigation stemming from leads developed during a drug probe in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The information developed there led to the discovery of the local criminal organization. The local ring is suspected of smuggling methamphetamine from Mexico into California and then on to various destinations throughout the United States. The ring is also suspected of smuggling methamphetamine precursor chemicals from Canada into the United States. The smugglers utilized locations throughout Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties, including residences, a restaurant, and an auto-body shop.

During the course of the investigation, agents have made 9 arrests, seized 15 pounds of methamphetamine, a kilo of cocaine, 70 grams of heroin, 10 firearms, 2 handgun silencers, and 3 luxury vehicles.

ICE received substantial assistance in the investigation from the Buena Park Police Department, the Santa Ana Police Department, the California Department of Justice/Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.